

The Challenge

This London Borough Council had been struggling to deliver its Troubled Families Programme, and risked losing future funding as a result. We were engaged to improve the authority's understanding of the Programme, and to find ways to raise the percentage of eligible families receiving help. The Ministry of Housing, Communities and Local Government (MHCLG) had written to the Council with concerns about governance and performance. We were invited to build a recovery plan that would bring together all the services involved.

The Outcome

Ameo delivered a successful recovery plan which convinced MHCLG that the Council had the ability to deliver the Programme. Our plan set out new governance procedures and raised awareness of the programme across the authority. Particular achievements included:

- creating a leaner data-gathering process to identify the most important cases
- writing new protocols for internal audit
- process tools to help with evidence gathering
- raising the programme's profile with service leads
- developing an understanding of the financial framework through coaching and training
- mitigating operational risks wherever possible

The Engagement

Our involvement was essentially about providing the authority with the basic building blocks to get back on track. Three elements were important:

- Reassuring MHCLG that our client was able to deliver a viable recovery plan, and that it had enough understanding of the Programme to continue to take it forward once our involvement had ended.
- Coaching team members in relation to the technical and reporting requirements of the Programme.
- Providing a clear recovery roadmap with effective governance. Our involvement was critical to get structures put in place and to make officers aware of these.

Perhaps the most important message we got across was that individual services were already fulfilling large elements of the Programme - they just weren't aware they were doing it. By putting service leads in touch with each other, and by formalising the reporting process, we were able to raise the Council's performance significantly. In the first three years of the Programme, the Council had identified 503 families whom it thought might benefit from inclusion. We found a further 234 cases in just four months.